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ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE B1

THE WASHINGTON POST  
26 September 1979

## Behind the German Lines With the OSS

By Joseph Mastrangelo

There were 38 of them originally, dropped behind the German lines at various times during World War II, and nobody knows how many are left. But a few of them were there last night among the hundreds who came to banquet, revive memories, listen to speeches and honor Jacques Chaban-Delmas, who was on their side as a leader of the French Resistance.

They were veterans of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), once dubbed the "Oh So Social" because of the number of its members listed in the Social Register. It was also forerunner of the CIA.

Among the 38 were a couple of famous names: the late columnist, Stewart Alsop, and William Colby, former head of the CIA. Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), an Air Force veteran, said last night that he, too, had worked with the OSS on radio communications when he was in China during the war.

Alice Harrington, who was also connected with the OSS and is now president of Friends of Animals, served during the war in London and Paris. "I'm not a very exciting person," she said. "The room is full of more exciting people."

Harrington, a civilian in lieutenant's uniform, acted as a secretary to a lot of GIs with nefarious backgrounds. "It was like a lot of guys out of the clink to help the war effort. I worked with forgers, safe robbers, anyone who could somehow fake money or forge an identity," she said. Then she added, "They were interesting people. Very artistic. When I look around this room, I don't think any of them are here."

The table talk was mostly of glories past, of the ones who jumped and the ones who didn't make it. The 38 were code-named Jedburgh after a town in Scotland. The town was, named, they maintained, after a judge who had a reputation for hanging people and then trying them.

Their molars had been drilled to make room for a cyanide tablet, to be used in case of capture. The instructions were to bite down hard. No one knew anyone who had actually done it.

Once inside enemy lines, the OSS men adopted various professions that took their fancy: they masqueraded as gardeners, wine merchants, artists. One of them claimed to be a bird-raiser.

But not all of them wore civilian clothes. Peter Ortiz said that during his stay in occupied Grenoble, he never took his marine uniform off. Instead, he covered it up with a French overcoat. In moments of abandon, usually in a barroom, he said, he would open the coat and flash his uniform at a table of Nazi soldiers.

During training, another one remembered, they used to sit drinking in a pub outside London. One would, casually, without looking up, crush out his cigarette on the back of a colleague's hand. They tried hard not to react.

They practiced jumping out of planes from barrage balloons over London. The deal was to swing in and drop from 250 feet, all the while wondering whom they would meet on the ground with code signals like, "Did your father play tennis in Los Angeles?"

They remembered that four of the 38 died making the jump, and another died on the ground when a careless soldier threw his Sten gun on a truck and it went off in his belly.

All of the survivors, one commented, wound up in some sort of trouble.

It was hard to separate fact from fiction in these old soldier's memories.

Last night they couldn't even agree among themselves.

"You were married 17 times," said one to another.

"No, it was only four."

"What are you talking about," his old buddy came back, "I met five of your wives."